



ROLE OF THE TIMER

Timers are a significant resource at swim meets and play a very important role in the success of the swimmers and in the smooth operation of the meet. All teams use their members/parents as volunteer timers to share the responsibility.

Be courteous to your fellow volunteers by being on time for your shift and cooperative with the Referee, Starter, Head Timer and swimmers.

While timers are volunteers, they are actually officials- so it's important to know the responsibilities, rules and procedures of timing. Timers have 2 prime responsibilities: 1) MAKE SURE THE RIGHT SWIMMER IS IN THE CORRECT EVENT, THE CORRECT HEAT, AND THE CORRECT LANE and 2) PROVIDE ACCURATE TIMES FOR EVERY SWIM EVENT.

- ALL meets use 2 timing systems: *semi-automatic* (buttons/plungers or Dolphin stop watches which stop the automatically started timing system and clock) and *manual* (digital stop watches). Usually there are 3 timers per lane; one operates the manual stop watch and a button/plunger or Dolphin stop watch and the other 2 timers operate a button/plunger or Dolphin stop watch. One timer shall record the times on the *lane sheets* (on the clipboard) and is generally considered to be the "Head Lane Timer".
- Swimmers line up behind the starting blocks by lane/heat for their swim event. The Head Lane Timer ensures the correct swimmer is present to swim by checking the name of the swimmer against the lane sheets on the clipboard. Perform this check prior to the swimmer getting on the starting block. When the Referee calls for the swimmers to step up onto the blocks, make sure your swimmer is stepping up. Sometimes it's confusing and difficult to hear- YOU MUST BE ALERT AND ATTENTIVE. If a swimmer misses their heat, they can be disqualified. If there's a problem, get the Referee or Starter's attention immediately.
- Once all of the swimmers are on the blocks, the Starter will usually say "Take your mark", then sound the start signal. The Referee and Starter are located on the side of the pool along with the Start Console. The Start Console emits the audio start signal and a simultaneous visual flash/strobe.
 - Timers will start the manual stop watch on the flash/strobe, not on the sound. If you miss the flash/strobe, or the flash fails for some reason, start your watch on the sound of the start signal. Find a spot near your lane where you can see. If your watch fails to start (or stops during the race), raise it over your head and get the attention of the Head Timer. He/She will bring you another watch or pick up the time for you. Always start your watch for every heat, even if you don't have a swimmer in your lane. It may be needed by another timer in another lane.
 - Timers with the semi-automatic button/plunger or Dolphin stop watches do NOT have to push any button at the start of the race.
- If your swimmer misses their heat, write "NS" on the lane sheet. If your swimmer gets out of the pool before the end of their race, write "DNF" on the lane sheet.
- Stop your watch and push the button/plunger or "stop" on the manual stop watch at the end of the race when **any** part of your swimmer's body touches **any** part of the wall. Don't worry if it's legal or not- that's the Stroke and Turn Judge's responsibility. **Get right up to the edge of the pool and look down for the touch.....**don't be afraid to get wet. Also, don't anticipate the touch. It's easy to get fooled. This is a common problem with very young swimmers. If you are working the plunger or Dolphin stop watch, push the button only once for a count of one- that's all it takes. Every time you push it, the computer records a new time. Once you stop the manual watch and/or push the button, step back away from the blocks and record the manual watch time on the time sheet. Write the time to the hundredth of a second without rounding (i.e., 33.49). If you missed the finish, write "NT" on the lane sheet. Don't try to match your time to the time on the scoreboard- it shouldn't be the same, and most often will not be the same. If there's a big discrepancy, report it to the Head Timer. A Runner will collect the lane sheets after each heat or event, respectively.

- At the end of the race, things get very crowded at the blocks- children who are not swimming or parents who are not timers or runners *should not be* in the starting block area. This is for swimmers, timers and runners only! It is very crowded and you don't want to miss a swimmer's start/finish. Please politely ask non-swimmers or non-volunteers to remove themselves from the starter block/ready chair area. Also, if your swimmer is having difficulty getting out of the pool after a race, offer to help them. It will help to keep the meet moving along in a timely manner.
- Stay back behind the blocks, except when stopping your watch and pushing your plunger button at the end of the race. If you get between the blocks at the start, you may block the Starter and/or Referee's line of sight to the swimmers in the heat. Your movement could also distract them or a swimmer during the start.
- For 25 yard events, your swimmer may start at the opposite end of the pool from where you are standing. Another method is for the Timers to go to the other end of the pool. In this case, make sure to check your swimmer's name at the end of the race. If it's not the right swimmer, write their name on the lane sheet and notify the Head Timer.
- In very large meets (like Champs or dual meets with large teams); the host team may resort to something called "flyover starts" or "overhead starts". This is when swimmers in the previous heat remain in the water for the start of the subsequent heat. This saves time and gives the swimmers a little rest at the end of their race. You may occasionally have to remind your swimmer to stay in the water in such cases. Things will be moving pretty quickly when using this method, so you must pay attention to the Starter. If not using flyover starts, make sure your swimmer quickly moves back behind the blocks- if they want their times, give it to them there, not up at the edge of the pool.
- If you need a break to go to the restroom, notify the Head Timer. He/She will get a relief timer for your lane.

It's very important that you take your responsibility as a Timer seriously. The swimmers work hard and are giving it their best shot. They deserve the same in return. You help keep the meet flowing smoothly by making sure swimmers are ready for their races. And, while the semi automatic timing system usually operates correctly and provides the swimmers their official times, often the Head Timer needs the manual times to determine the Official Time when the system malfunctions.

It's not as hard as it sounds, but you should know that we couldn't run swim meets without timers- your help is essential and appreciated- THANK YOU.